

Parole News

Spring, 2008



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Chairman Walsh's Swearing in Ceremony

By Donald Giancioppo, Executive Director

On Wednesday, February 27, 2008, along with Undersecretary Marybeth Heffernan, Board Members Doris Dottridge, Tom Merigan, Pam Lombardini and Mark Conrad, I had the honor to be present when Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray officiated the swearing in of Chairman Walsh and Board Member Leticia Muñoz at the State House. In addition, recently appointed Department of Correction Commissioner Harold Clarke and Sex Offender Registry Board Chairwoman Sandra Edwards were sworn in at the same ceremony. Whereas the event was conducted in the Governor's Executive Chamber, which is a relatively small room, attendance was limited however the formality, magnitude and dignified manner of the ceremony was an experience that I wish the entire staff could have shared, yet in the truest sense, you *were* there.



Lieutenant Governor Timothy Murray and Chairman Maureen Walsh.

Chairman Walsh has always provided exceptional leadership which has continually resulted in operational improvements, additional resources and the work of the agency, particularly all of you, receiving the attention you deserve. Therefore, watching her, with her right hand held high and Lieutenant Governor Murray administering the oath of office was a moment that truly belongs to the entire staff. I know that she is always cognizant that she represents not only herself, but everyone in the agency who works every day trying to make a difference in the lives of others.

Recognizing that everyone in the agency plays a vital role, there is no doubt that the agency's successes over the past few years can be attributed to many factors including all of you. However, I do not think anyone can argue that without Maureen's direction and guidance, we would not have accomplished so much and for that, we are all grateful for her reappointment and can look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead under Chairman Walsh's continued leadership.

White Ribbon Campaign

By Janice Dean, Assistant Director of Victim Services Unit



Pictured above from left to right are Peter Corriveau, Don Giancioppo, Tom Jenkins, Dave O'Connor, Liam Whitley, Mark Conrad, Greg Narvas, Jay Talbot, Don LaFratta, Gary Nevins, George Valentgas, Tom Merigan and Richard Vernick.

The White Ribbon Campaign is an international initiative to engage men to help end violence against women. The Massachusetts Parole Board participated in the 1st Annual Massachusetts White Ribbon Day hosted by Governor Deval Patrick at the State House on February 14, 2008. It was attended by Chairman Walsh, Board Member Tom Merigan, Board Member Candace Kochin, Board Member Doris Dottridge, Board Member Mark Conrad, Board Member Letica Muñoz, Board Member Pamela Lombardini, Executive Director Donald Giancioppo, Chief George Valentgas, Assistant Parole Supervisor Mike Bird from Field Services and Janice Dean, Christine O'Connor, Erin Farrell and Christopher Daly from

the Victim Services Unit.

After the ceremony, Board Member Mark Conrad, who had been appointed by the Governor to serve as an Ambassador for this campaign, spoke to everyone at the Central Office in Natick about the importance of this initiative and encouraged everyone to “take the pledge” and wear the White Ribbon lapel pin. All male parole staff were asked to sign a Banner memorializing this event. This banner has since been distributed by the Victim Service Coordinators to Regional Field Offices for signatures from anyone wishing to take the pledge and wear a ribbon. To date we have approximately forty signatures.

New “Parole News” Editor Named

By Debbie Belliveau, Systems Analyst

The editorial duties of “Parole News” have been taken over by Stephanie Coughlin, Research Analyst with the Information Technology Department. Stephanie will be overseeing the content and production of “Parole News”, which will now be published on a quarterly basis. In addition, Stephanie will also be writing her own column “Statistically Speaking”, which debuts in this edition of “Parole News”.

The Agency is always looking for articles and contributions to the quarterly newsletter so please feel free to contact Stephanie at 508-650-4558 with any suggestions that you may have!

A Career of Building Partnerships and Reducing Barriers

By Nelson Simao, Reentry Housing Program Coordinator



Substance Abuse Coordinator Mike Stevens and Parole Officer Lori Correia meet with a client at the Worcester Parole Office.

As a police officer in Southbridge in the mid 1980's, Mike Stevens was introduced to all the elements that would lead him to his current position as the Substance Abuse Counselor for the Worcester Parole Office. It was not the road the son of a cop expected when he walked the beat after midnight in the small Central Massachusetts town in order to go to college to become a teacher. "It started as an easy beat but it changed overnight" recalls Mr. Stevens. What lead to the change of dynamics in the town was the massive job cuts at an optical manufacturing plant. The loss of good paying, low-skilled jobs came at time when crack cocaine began hitting the streets. Coupled with the increased gang activity to fill the economic void, it made for the perfect storm of crime on the streets of Southbridge.

Until then, Mike had very little knowledge of drugs and the negative impact it had on families and neighborhoods but for the next 15 years working his way through the ranks from a Police Officer, Detective, Sergeant and finally to Chief of Police, he was determined to rebuild the community. He held meetings with the local Board of Health, community leaders and neighborhood groups targeting high crime areas. He also helped open the first Youth Center in town. Funded almost entirely by a Byrne Grant, the center was open during "high risk" time after school providing tutoring, civic activities, an exercise room and access to a computer lab, all in an effort to keep kids away from gangs. His efforts were recognized when we won a lifetime achievement award for community policing.

Mike retired from the Southbridge Police Department in 2000 and started a new career as a Project Manager for the Department of Revenue. His focus was on reducing barriers of former inmates to meet their child support obligation while allowing for a better reintegration into society. This was achieved by designing a system of notification of accounts to represent a reduced level of earned income while incarcerated. This information sharing approach involved reaching out and forming partnerships with Parole, the Department of Corrections and various county jails.

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Chairman's Column

Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

Recently, I had the opportunity to be present and make opening remarks at an Employer's Breakfast in Worcester that was sponsored by the Massachusetts Parole Board and the United States Probation Office. The purpose of this meeting was for potential employers to hear about the benefits and additional advantages of hiring ex-offenders, especially those under supervision. Dave Sullivan and Chris Foster from the Massachusetts Parole Board did an excellent job in representing the Agency and providing employer's with the information that they need to make a hiring decision. While we are all aware of the importance of former offenders returning to the workplace and know that recidivism and unemployment have a direct correlation, the work by Dave Sullivan and Chris Foster in educating employers about certain benefits such as the federal bonding process benefits all of us.



Also at the employer breakfast was Board Member Pamela Lombardini. Ms. Lombardini, who has years of experience in the field as a federal probation officer and who comes to the table with energy and enthusiasm, has volunteered to assist in re-employment efforts. Pam has been an invaluable member of the team and has worked collaboratively with Dave Sullivan to further improve the process by which parolees gain

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The Governor's Diversity Initiative: A Personal Perspective

By Diane Kelly, IPO at MCI-Concord



According to Webster's ninth new Collegiate Dictionary, diversity is the condition of being different. As a fifteen year employee of the Parole Board, I realize that a diversity initiative is not only important to the overall enhancement of all state agencies, but essential to serving our clientele effectively. When the Governor's diversity was introduced to me this year I felt it was a great opportunity to become involved in affecting change.

Governor Deval Patrick created Executive Order 478,

an order regarding non-discrimination, diversity, equal opportunity and affirmative action in January 2008. Governor Deval Patrick then pushed this initiative off the ground. The central objective is "creating a culture of inclusion that values and promotes diversity and equal opportunity for all individuals". This order mandated diversity training for the executive branch of the state, and all employees must be trained by June 30, 2008. The office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity conducted the 4 day diversity training which I attended

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Annual Second Chance Employer Breakfast Held In Worcester

By Christopher Foster, Job Specialist



Pictured above on left is Board Member Pamela Lombardini with U.S. Probation Officer Lisa Paiva whom both attended the Employer Breakfast.

On Friday April 4th, at the Crowne Plaza in Worcester, the Massachusetts Parole Board, in true collaboration with other Federal agencies, hosted its annual “Second Chance Employer Breakfast”. Partnering agencies and organizations were of great help in making this event such a success. These supportive agencies and organizations were the United States Probation Office, the local Career Center “Workforce Central” and also other local programs such as the New Leaf Program and E.P.O.C.A. (Ex Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement).

The morning began with the registration of employers, in addition to representatives from local, state and federal entities. Despite the fowl weather, Parole was pleased that nearly ten employers from both local and statewide companies attended in support of our process. A light breakfast was available and time was provided for employers to interact with all of us working in support of this reemployment initiative.

Chairman Maureen Walsh made the opening remarks for the event, followed by Chief Probation Officer John Bocon of United States Federal Probation. After the opening remarks, an employer with a positive hiring experience and two ex-offenders (one coming from United States Probation and the other from the New Leaf Program) spoke. Both the employer and ex-offenders were able to provide great personal accounts of their individual success with

the Massachusetts reemployment program.

A new component to our breakfast this year was a question and answer panel. This panel consisted of successfully employed ex-offenders, employers who have hired from this population and also criminal justice professionals working in the field. The panel was open for discussion on any aspect of hiring ex-offenders. Given the thoughtful questions from employers, we are proud to say the discussion was a success.

Our anticipated outcomes for this breakfast were the following:

- *To educate employers about the Parole Board’s employment process
- *Encourage more participation from employers
- *Receive insight and feedback to better our employment process
- *Encourage others to promote our initiative

We are confident in the results of our survey (*provided to employers at the end of the event*) which showed that we successfully completed these goals. We look forward to continued success in our program as well as developing a greater working relationship with some of our new found employers.

Statistically Speaking ...

By Stephanie Coughlin, Research Analyst

Starting in the Spring 2008 newsletter, "Statistically Speaking" will become a recurring column featuring research and statistics from all divisions of parole, including: Field Services, Transitional Services, Legal Unit, Interstate Compact, Warrant and Apprehension Unit, Victim Service Unit and Program's Division. Research and statistics help inform parole staff and other outside agencies of the great work and initiatives the Parole Board undertakes each day. Statistics help us to do such things as calculate an overall paroling rate each year, monitor hearing trends, examine parole officer caseloads and evaluate Graduated Sanctions. Please be sure to check back quarterly to learn what statistics and research can teach you about our Agency!

In this edition, "Statistically Speaking" will highlight the division of Transitional Services.

In 2007, the Parole Board conducted **8,992** institutional release hearings, **254** rescission hearings and **607** revocation hearings for all state and county inmates.

The overall paroling rate in 2007 for the above combined hearings was **68%**.

In 2007, the Lifer Unit held **38** initial hearings, which resulted in a paroling rate of **29%**. The Lifer Unit also held 71 review hearings, resulting in a **25%** paroling rate.

MCI Framingham held the most state release hearings in 2007 with **377**.

Suffolk County House of Correction held the most county release hearings in 2007 with **1,143**.

In 2007, **2,704 or 23%** of eligible state and county inmates **waived** their right to a release hearing. When comparing this percentage of waivers to 2006, there is virtually no difference as **22%** of eligible inmates waived their right to a release hearing in 2006.

Also in 2007, **4,362 or 33%** of eligible state and county inmates **postponed** their right to a release hearing. Overall postponements rose **3%** in 2007 from **30%** in 2006.

A Career of Building Partnerships and Reducing Barriers

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During this time working with inmates of whom a majority had substance abuse problems, Mike wanted to learn more about drug addiction and soon went to the University of Massachusetts to receive his counseling certificate, which he saw as a continuing cycle of reentry education. He began working as a Substance Abuse Counselor for Spectrum Health Systems and was assigned to MCI Framingham. Working with female inmates who entered the facility detoxing, and sent to the 5 week FIRST STEP program, Mike saw the progression of drug addicts through different stages of behaviors, increased cognitive skills and improved health.

When Mike heard about the opening for a Substance Abuse Coordinator in Parole, he immediately asked Spectrum to assign him there. Mike wanted to return to Worcester County and continue the work he was doing behind the walls. Besides his work at the office, Mike has recently started a weekly relapse prevention class at the Almost Home program, teaching behavioral skills to reinforce positive changes.

Whether working the city streets or institutions, whether working with children or parolees, Mike Stevens has spent close to 30 years building partnerships and reducing barriers. Asked to sum up what he has seen over this time, Mike says "We are light years ahead of where we were when I saw a town begin feeling the effects of crime and drugs, today I have Parole Officers asking me for my professional opinion on treatment protocols. Now everyone is working together for a common case, reducing recidivism."

Chairman's Column

Parole Board Chairman Maureen Walsh

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meaningful employment. Pam understands first hand that employment is critical to our collective efforts to maintain stability and safety in the community. She has traveled to many of the regional field offices with Dave in order to further understand the operations and to add much needed input. I appreciate Board Member Lombardini's willingness to devote time and effort into this area, as it is of critical importance to our agency.

Also, Board Member Conrad, along with Heather Hall, Kira Dunn and Diane Kelly, have been doing a tremendous job in our diversity training. Again, these four employees have worked together to put on a diversity training for each employee of the agency. I attended the first training, along with all of the Board Members, and I can honestly say that it was one of the better trainings that the agency has put on in years. It underscores the importance of being aware in the workplace and treating individuals with the appropriate level of respect and courtesy, whether they happen to be co-workers, supervisors or parolees. This training really opens your eyes and your mind to the subtle and unintentional way in which we may speak or act that is offensive to others. I encourage everyone to take full advantage of this training and I want to extend my appreciation to the team leaders for their work!!

The Governor's Diversity Initiative: A Personal Perspective

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(Train the Trainer), and The Center for Youth and Communities at the Heller School, Brandeis University in cooperation with the Commonwealth's Office of Work/Life Diversity wrote the curriculum.

While I was excited to see familiar faces from my Agency at the initial training, the trainers made it clear that we were to move outside of our comfort zones and connect with unfamiliar faces from other participating state agencies. Thus began my training in diversity. What I learned in the four days of training is that we all have a tendency to tolerate what's safe, familiar, and comfortable. I was challenged to step outside of what feels comfortable for me and broaden my perspective on differences in others. I realized that diversity has many layers. For me, diversity had been limited to race, gender, and ethnicity, my new understanding is that it is much more multi-layered.

Because of the training we received, Board Member Mark Conrad, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning Kira Dunn, Assistant General Counsel Heather Hall and I now have a unique opportunity to enhance our

understanding of diversity and share this with our Agency. As the four days progressed I became more comfortable with the trainers and the other participants. I realized that I needed to keep an open mind with the curriculum and eventually my awareness level grew and I became enthusiastic about this initiative. The trainers were effective with their teaching methods and got all of the participants involved with continued dialogue and group exercises. The training left me with valuable tools and armed me with a curriculum to confront ignorance in the work place.

The "Model Agenda" is to teach diversity on the myriad of levels at our Agency. These include diversity at management level, employee level, and service level. "The governor's initiative is comprised of seven related activities and strategies. Each is focused on impacting diversity in the state government workplace." My hope for this initiative is that it is the beginning of continued dialogue and growth. The model clearly specifies that our goal is "not to change participant's minds, but to challenge other's thinking and heighten their awareness". I'm confident that we will be successful with this important agenda.